



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

301 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH • P.O. BOX 94987 • LINCOLN, NE 68509

Western Management Services
101 S. Hastings
Hastings, NE 68901

September 10, 2001
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Berger, Bloechle, Curry, Davis, Fox, Gieschen, Grone, Jelinek, Leach (sub for Kolb),
Lloyd, Nolan Brown, Ortmeier, Sorensen
Absent: Breckner, Carey, Hodges, Holcomb, Rasmussen, Shepard

I. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

II. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Gieschen and seconded by Fox. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes from April 17, 2001

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Nolan Brown and seconded by Davis. Motion passed.

IV. Director's Report (Frank Lloyd)

1) Schools and Transition Programs – Frank discussed the Transition partnerships between schools and VR. VR is going to a few schools to find out ways to strengthen our partnerships statewide and improve services. VR feels they do a good job of working with juniors, but is concerned that they are not effective in working with 14 and 15 year olds. They would like to improve their relationships with schools in providing necessary services to kids so they can be prepared for a job when they are juniors and seniors. VR feels that they can be more effective in the use of their time and service to transitions students.

2) Bi-regional Employment Conference – The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is sponsoring a bi-regional employment conference for people in the twelve states that make up Regions 5 and 7. Fifteen to seventeen people from Nebraska are going. Stipends were available and divided into five for Omaha, five for Lincoln, and five for Greater Nebraska. The intent is to foster collaboration in the placement of people with disabilities.

3) Monthly Meetings – Margy and Frank are going out each month to the VR offices to meet with office directors in Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk, and Kearney. In addition, they have decided to meet with various partners each month to meet their staff, walk through their facility, and discuss success in the partnership. They plan to continue to do this around the state.

4) Marriott's Graduation – Graduation for the consumers who have successfully completed the training through the Marriott partnership is scheduled for September 12, 2001.

5) Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Council (MHPEC) – The council authorized a sub-committee to look at employment issues for people with severe and persistent mental illness. The sub-committee has had several meetings, discussed issues, summarized, and will be making 7-8 recommendations to the MHPEC. One recommendation is that HHS, Behavioral Health, VR, and other major providers and consumers get together and discuss more detailed issues around these recommendations. Something different needs to happen to make the system work better (staff time, policies, funding, etc.). The Medicaid buy-in will be a major piece. Other issues concern communication and consistency between providers and agencies.

6) Benefits Analysis – VR staff currently provide this service to clients in trying to determine what it will cost for them to go to work, will the benefit be offset through increased wages, etc. VR feels that it would be better if an independent group provided this service. Since VR's focus is getting people to work and off of benefits, helping a client decide to work could be seen as a potential conflict of interest. Benefit analysis is not readily available to clients other than through VR. It is a valuable service for clients deciding to work or remain on benefits.

7) VR Offices – VR has opened an office in South Sioux City and is currently employing two people. They also have been shifting staff from O'Neil and Norfolk into Columbus to have a greater presence there.

8) Newsletter – It has been a number of months since the last newsletter was completed. All SRC members should receive copies. Copies also go to the senators, congress, legislature, providers, and staff. August's newsletter featured VR's partnership with Treasurer's office; September's newsletter is currently at print shop, and October's newsletter is in layout.

9) Federal Reviewers – For the past two months, there have been two federal reviewers in the state agency. Rod King who is in charge of annual monitoring of programs, relationship with WIA, eligibility, and credentials of staff, and Tony Morabile, the financial person from KC. They have looked at issues related to matching and use of funds. VR has gotten letters back from the federal office on both reviews, and everything appears to be fine.

V. **WIA Update** (*Mel Bargas*)

1) Workforce Investment Board – The Commissioner of Education (Doug Christensen) has replaced Frank on the Workforce Investment Board upon the request of the Commissioner of Labor, Butch Laquona. Mr. Laquona met with Doug and asked him to reconsider being on the Board. Doug originally appointed Frank to serve on the board since the activities of the board centered more around VR than the Department of Education. Frank now believes that Doug should represent the Department of Education rather than Frank representing VR because issues with WIA need support from Doug and the Board of Education. Doug indicated that he would serve, but would like VR to have separate representation. The WIA Board has not agreed to this yet because adding Frank would mean another employer would also need to be added.

2) Statewide Marketing Committee – WIA is considering developing a statewide marketing committee. The Department of Labor makes \$5,000 grants available to local boards to encourage consistency in promoting one-stop centers by using a common name, logo, and materials. They would like the Workforce Development logo incorporated into all advertisements so individuals will identify with all the one-stop centers statewide. During the last Greater Nebraska board meeting, local individuals expressed concern that they would like to have other names on the advertisements from the one-stops. Lincoln registered and uses the name One-Stop Employment Solutions. The Department of Labor has contracted with Blame Communications to do advertising and helping with development of these activities.

3) Governor's Summit on Workforce Development – Last month approximately 3,400 people attended the Governor's summit. The Governor announced that \$75,000 would be available for adaptive devices for people with blindness, visual impairments, and other special needs. Frank and Mark Schultz approached the Dept. of Labor about making information in resource rooms accessible. ATP has a plan to help them do this, and the Dept of Labor has agreed to the plan.

4) LR 275 – Legislative Resolution was introduced by the Business and Labor Committee, and designed to study and examine whether successful implementation is taking place and identify legislative changes that may be necessary to assist in Workforce Development implementation.

5) Workforce Development – Four comprehensive centers have been fully implemented this year in Columbus, Norfolk, Grand Island, and Beatrice, and VR has signed MOU's in Omaha and Lincoln. Lincoln has asked VR to pay for a portion of the resource room and employer resources, and several of the one-stops in Greater NE were asking VR the same question. VR's position remains that the information being provided in the resource rooms at the one-stop centers are part of the basic labor information exchange currently being provided and paid for by the Department of Labor. Although the cost sharing amount is minimal, VR is not allowed to spend money on consumers who are not VR clients. VR is an eligibility program and they cannot spend money on the general public who will be using the resource room to receive basic labor information. VR has agreed to pay for their share of the meeting rooms, office space, bathrooms, etc that will be used by their clients. Frank has checked with surrounding state VR programs in Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, and Missouri and they hold the same position as Nebraska regarding paying for resource rooms. Because of the difference in opinion, agreements have not been signed yet between VR and several of the one-stops centers across the state.

VR has begun receiving referrals from all of the one-stop centers, and is paying for leased space even in those centers where the MOU is not yet signed. VR will also be electronically linked to the one-stop's network system so if a VR client comes in and an intake is done, the client will automatically be in the one-stop system. VR will not charge the one-stop centers for putting the information in.

Lincoln – Lincoln has signed the agreement indicating that VR is not required to pay for resource costs. Lincoln will be occupying space on an itinerate basis. The Nebraska Workforce Access System (NWAS) wants all partners who use their system to contribute to the costs of it. VR has their own data system, and will have a shared data file with mutually agreed upon data and milestones as agreed upon by the Department of Labor.

Omaha – VR signed the MOU and attachments, agreeing that VR will not pay for the resource rooms. They will start with two comprehensive centers in Omaha. The current director is no longer there, and Maria Vasquez has been appointed as the new director. A third affiliate site will be located at 24th and L.

VI. Old Business

A. IPE Committee Focus Group Update (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

After receiving feedback from focus groups, the committee is developing a process for the IPE. The goal is to address more issues up-front with clients to help ensure their success. The committee would like to develop an IPE form and process that the clients can complete themselves, using VR as a resource. A handout of the focus groups comments will be distributed to the council with the minutes.

The IPE is a two-part, handwritten form. The first part contains goals and major steps, with a separate form that describes each step in detail, including who will provide services. Staff wanted the form to be handwritten so consumers can complete it themselves. Once the IPE is developed, staff will enter the information into the VR data system.

Frank indicated that the document helps the client have informed choice. It is important that the client believes this is the right job for them, and understands how they reached that decision. It will also help promote responsibility by helping the client identify what they have to do to make the plan successful. A copy of the draft IPE and instructions will be distributed to the council with the minutes.

B. Background Checks (*Frank Lloyd*)

1) Staff - Background screens have been implemented for all new employees before they are hired. A job may be offered contingent on the result of the background screen, which is handled by the Department Attorney. The background screen consists of four checks, and anything found as a result of the screen that would prevent VR from hiring the person is brought to Mel's attention where it is attempted to be resolved. If the person is considered to not be appropriate to work with consumers, they will not be hired. The background screens take approximately seven to eight days to complete. This is for new employees only.

2) Providers - A provider that may have sole contact with clients (e.g., job coach) in performing certain services will be required to pass a background screen. If the provider is an individual, a background screen will be completed before services are performed. If the provider is a company, a new clause has been added to the service agreement signed by the provider which ensures that the provider has completed background screens on their employees. This policy goes into effect October 1, 2001.

3) Clients - After clients have chosen their job goal, they will be notified if a background screen is required for the job. VR is currently developing this process, which will be implemented at a later date.

C. Worker's Comp. (*Don Crouch*)

After assessing the current agreement between the Workers Compensation Court rehabilitation section and VR, it was determined that no changes will be made at this time.

D. Orientation Survey (*Don Crouch*)

The council developed a survey for clients to complete after they have been through orientation. VR recently implemented this form and the offices have made boxes available where for clients to leave the survey. The area administrator reviews the surveys for local information and then passes it on to Don to compile into a report. Don gave the council a brief report of some of the statistics from the surveys turned in thus far. A final report will be distributed to the council next month.

VII. Reports

A. Committee Reports

Client Service Delivery – (*Ortmeier reporting*)

Dave Jelinek agreed to write the committee summary for the annual report. During the next year, the committee will be continue to focus on other surveys, beyond the orientation survey. It has been suggested that the committee look at a way to evaluate the changes in post-secondary funding.

Interagency Outreach Committee – (*Davis reporting*)

The committee discussed identifying someone to present information to the council on the Ticket to Work program. Carla agreed to contact someone for the November meeting.

The committee offered suggestions for information that should be included in the next annual report. These included the council's goal and objectives, the organizational structure of VR, and more colorful graphics and charts. The committee would also like to include the number of people served by VR, the number of clients served by county, the funding sources, the primary disability of VR consumers, and the service and outcome by cultural/ethnic group. An application to become a council member and a calendar of events could also be included.

Legislative Committee – (*Gieschen reporting*)

Tim sent e-mailed information on LB164, the Medicaid Buy-in bill. The council is reviewing this bill and will send the council more information as it becomes available. At that time, committee may suggest the council take a position.

B. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The CAP report was distributed to the council prior to the meeting. Rasmussen was not available for questions.

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

Chuck Leach, who attended the council meeting for Tim Kolb, reported that the Independent Living Council is sending representatives to the Rural Independent Living conference in Portland, OR. The three year State Independent Living has been completed and the council is currently setting up committees to track the goals. The SILC is looking at how to expand IL centers, and have discussed the possibility of a cyber independent living center as being more economically in rural areas of the state. They are exploring whether or not cyber centers would be effective in rural areas that do not have access to the internet.

VIII. New Business

A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

Update on self employment. Last October VR contracted with three private individuals across the state to work with clients interested in self employment. Clients interested in self-employment first work with VR on disability related issues, and then are referred to one of the business consultants. The consultants do a feasibility assessment to determine the potential success of the business. Based on the feasibility study, the consultant will work with the client to develop a business plan, and then monitors that plan to assure it is working. This includes taking the consumer to the banks, assisting in getting a loan, and other economic development aspects.

It is too soon to determine success rates. Since October, approximately 30 consumers have had self employment feasibility assessments done, and several business plans have been developed. Staff have indicated that it working very well.

B. Development of Annual Report

Committee reports are due to Cathy by October 1, 2001.

C. Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) Representative (*Sue Gieschen*)

PILS hosted a JAM in Alliance on July 26 which was attended by approximately 75 people. Gieschen served as the SRC representative. Davis will be the SRC representative at the JAM scheduled for tonight in Hastings.

D. New Member Report

The Executive Committee conducted interviews in August and appointed the following new members to serve on the 01/02 State Rehabilitation Council: Mark Schultz, Merwyn Vavrina, Todd Steffes, Michelle Smith.

E. Proposed Meeting Dates/ New Member Training

Orientation for new member training is scheduled for Wednesday, October 17. All council members are welcome to attend. An agenda will be sent out with the minutes.

Proposed meeting dates for 01/02 council meetings was distributed prior to the meeting. The council approved the proposed dates.

F. Election of Officers

A motion was made by Nolan Brown and seconded by Curry that the council suspend the bylaws related to election of officers. Motion passed unanimously. Nominations for Executive Committee are as follows:

Fox nominated Gieschen to serve as Chairperson.
Gieschen nominated Davis to serve as Vice-Chairperson.

The following council members were nominated to serve on the Executive Committee:
Gieschen nominated Fox. Nominations cease
Nolan Brown nominated Ortmeier
Davis nominated Jelinek.

All nominations were unanimously approved.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Gieschen and seconded by Fox. Motion passed.
Meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Frank Lloyd presented a certificate to Sharon Bloechle for her commitment to the council and it's activities over the last 8 year. This is Bloechle last council meeting as her term ends on September 30, 2001.